

# The Builder.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1852.



OD ALMIGHTY first planted a garden; and, indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures; it is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man; without which buildings and palaces are but gross bandy-works; and a man shall ever see that when ages grow to civility and elegance, men come to build stately, sooner than garden finely; as if gardening were the greater perfection." So wrote the great Lord Chancellor, who, while giving to the world the *Novum Organum*, could dally with a double violet, and lay down rules for the right ordering of flower-beds. To "garden finely" is still a difficulty; we mean, of course, gardening in the large;—the disposition and laying out of grounds,—landscape-gardening, as it is sometimes termed,—and those who have sought to teach it by books have not done much in furtherance of the object. The study of Burke, and Gilpin, and Payne Knight, and Price, and Whistely, and Loudon is very useful, absolutely necessary, indeed, but will scarcely serve to teach what Beauty is, still less how to produce it. "Ideas of beauty," says Gilpin, truly enough, "vary with the object, and with the eye of the spectator. Those artificial forms appear generally the most beautiful with which we have been the most conversant. Thus the stonemason sees beauties in a well-jointed wall, which escape the architect, who surveys the building under a different idea. And thus the painter, who compares his object with the rules of his art, sees it in a different light from the man of general taste, who surveys it only as simply beautiful."

We must go into the fields and woods and gardens, study Nature in her ever-varying aspects, and art in its best forms:—

"Beauty best is taught  
By those, the favoured few, whom heaven has lent  
The power to seize, select, and reunite  
Her loveliest features; and of these to form  
One archetype complete, of sovereign grace."

In Nature, go where we will,—to the plain, the wood, the quarry, or the still shore,—we may everywhere find beauties and picturesque effects, which will impress us and may be garnered up, even if we are not aware that Burke calls *smoothness* the most considerable source of beauty, and that Gilpin finds *roughness* gives that particular quality which we call "picturesque." As Mason sings,—

"Through this terrestrial waste,  
The seeds of grace are sown,—profusely sown,—  
Even where we least may hope."

Intimate acquaintance with nature in general will best enable us to judge of the art which seeks to improve her in particulars. Still, we must not neglect the teachers, and here we have before us a fresh book on the subject, by Mr. C. H. J. Smith, of Edinburgh, called "Parks and Pleasure Grounds; or Practical Notes on Country Residences, Villas, Public Parks, and Gardens." Mr. Smith is a practical man, and his volume contains much useful information and many sensible remarks. The headings of the chapters will make known its scope:—The House and Offices: The Ap-

proach: Pleasure Grounds: The Park: Ornamental Character of Trees: Planting: Fences of the Grounds: Water: Kitchen Gardens: Public Parks: The Villa: On the Laying out and Improvement of Grounds: The Arboretum: and the Pinetum. The chapter on the Approach is the best in the book, and his remarks on an ill-judged one will serve to show how he writes.

"The Fine Approach.—The species of access to a mansion-house which we have ventured to call a *fine approach* is seldom found connected with large residences or extensive estates, but not unfrequently with such small places as require only one approach and a back road. We may describe it as a carriage-way from the entrance to the house, so laid out as to display all the principal views and leading beauties of the place. It leaves nothing worth looking at to be seen from the windows, and it renders all further inspection from walks or gardens unnecessary. It is in itself a thing of primary importance. Indeed, nothing can rival its ambition, except, perhaps, the vanity of the individual to whom it owes its formation. These approaches are often unnecessarily prolonged. We have seen them following the boundary of the property to a considerable distance from the entrance, the only objects between them and the public road being the park-wall and a belt of shrubs quite insufficient to deaden the noise of carriages outside. In other places they may be seen extending for a mile or more through a narrow stripe of trees planted on the sloping banks and knolls, on the side of a small valley or of a wide gleen along which the public road passes. This is, indeed, the favourite position of the *fine approach*. The highest powers of the designer, who is rash and inexperienced enough to undertake the work, are called into exercise. Cuts, and curves, and gradients, and embankments, are all elaborated for the purpose of enabling the approach to occupy the principal points of view. In the limited grounds no room is left for the formation of a good walk. The approach is walk and ride and everything. Seclusion there is none, except that the *fine approach* is not much frequented, people familiar with it often preferring to go by the back way to the house. It is evident that in such elaborations the proprietor thinks more of securing the applause of strangers than of consulting his own comfort and convenience. He is content to admire and enjoy by proxy. In short, of all the follies committed in the laying out of country residences, the *fine approach* may be allowed to wear the crown."

He is not very well disposed towards an "avenue," seldom recommends the planting of it, for the invalid reason, amongst other reasons, that "it requires to grow for the lifetime of two or three generations before it produces its full effect;" but, nevertheless, he agrees with Mr. Gilpin in regarding an old avenue, with its double or quadruple rows of ancestral trees. He sees no reason, moreover, nor do we, why the old style of gardening to which they belong, with its alleys, terraces, stairs, fountains, and statues should not be reproduced in certain cases. Pope, it will be remembered, ridiculed the formalities and puerilities of the gardens of his day, and the—

"Statue growing that noble place in,  
All leathen goddeses most rare,  
Homer, Ptolemy, and Nebuchadnezzar,  
Standing naked in the open air."

Notwithstanding Mr. Pope, a few statues, well placed, have great value in landscape-gardening. Garden seats, summer-houses, terraces, fountains, and other similar adornments, are the province of the architect, as indeed should be the garden also.

The Rev. W. Gilpin dedicated his *Essays on "Picturesque Beauty and Picturesque Travel"* (1792), to Mr. William Lock, who showed, by Norbury Park, in Surrey, a domain full of beauties and striking effects, his taste and knowledge. A pleasant party were gathered about the present hospitable owner of this beautiful park, when we last saw the sun set behind the magnificent grove of yews there, in a scene which has few parallels, and Mr.

William Took wrote at the moment on a garden-seat put up to overlook it—

"Here Nature, in her loveliest forms behold,  
Sublimely beautiful, and mildly bold;  
Each charm combined that pleasure can impart,  
Or Nature borrow, from her handmaid, art,  
(As in our sparkling circle here we find).  
Completed by Grissell, what Lock so well designed."

We have before now referred to some spoilers of God's earth, who, under the title of landscape gardeners, take their five guineas a day to mar and obliterate. Men of this class are cleverly satirised in "Headlong Hall," by Peacock, quoted by Mr. Downing, of America, in his excellent "Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening," which we introduced to our readers about three years ago. A party are assembled at Lord Littlebrains', and amongst them is one Milestone (intended to caricature "Capability Brown," the great gardener of the day), who is exhibiting his designs for the improvement of the estate:—

"Mr. Milestone.—Here is another part of the ground in its natural state. Here is a large rock, with the mountain-ash rooted in its fissures, overgrown, as you see, with ivy and moss; and from this part it bursts a little fountain, that runs bubbling down its rugged sides."

Miss Tenorina.—O, how beautiful! How I should love the melody of that miniature cascade!

Mr. Milestone.—Beautiful, Miss Tenorina! Hideous, base, common, and popular. Such a thing as you may see anywhere, in wild and mountainous districts. Now, observe the metamorphosis. Here is the same rock, cut into the shape of a giant. In one hand he holds a horn, through which the little fountain is thrown to a prodigious elevation. In the other is a ponderous stone, so exactly balanced, as to be apparently ready to fall on the head of any person who may happen to be beneath; and there is Lord Littlebrains walking under it.

Squire Headlong.—Miraculous, by Mahomet!

Mr. Milestone.—This is the summit of a hill, covered, as you perceive, with wood, and with those mossy stones scattered at random under the trees.

Miss Tenorina.—What a delightful spot to read in, on a summer's day! The air must be so pure, and the wind must sound so divinely in the tops of those old pines!

Mr. Milestone.—Bad taste, Miss Tenorina; bad taste, I assure you. Here is the spot improved. The trees are cut down, the stones are cleared away; this is an octagonal pavilion, exactly on the centre of the summit, and there you see Lord Littlebrains, on the top of the pavilion, enjoying the prospect with a telescope.

The few persons who do understand the subject are not employed as they should be: the majority of owners seeming not to know that,—

"Elegance, chief grace the garden shows,  
And most attractive, is the fair result  
Of thought, the creature of a polished mind."

In some gardens that we have recently seen, every principle of art is disregarded. Those who created some of the absurdities we have in our eye certainly did not think with Bacon that "as for the making of knots or figures with divers coloured earths, they may be under the windows of the house on that side on which the garden stands: they be but toys: you may see as good sights many times in tarts."

Mr. Smith alludes, with justice, to the brief period that is usually conceded to the artist:—"A man may thrust his preconceived fancies on a place as fast as he can stake them out; but if the treatment is to be adjusted to the ground, and if harmony and variety of effect are desired, as they always ought to be, time should be given for the laws of suggestion to come into free play."

Sir Walter Scott has said the same thing:—"The landscape gardener is trotted over the grounds two, three, or four times, and called